

NOTE: This notice was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 27, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on February 28.

**Message to the Congress on
Continuation of the National
Emergency With Respect to Cuba**

February 26, 2002

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, which states that the emergency declared with respect to the Government of Cuba's destruction of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba on February 24, 1996, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2002.

George W. Bush

The White House,
February 26, 2002.

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**Remarks Following a Roundtable
Discussion on Welfare Reform and
an Exchange With Reporters in
Charlotte, North Carolina**

February 27, 2002

The President. We are honored—I am honored to be here. We just had a great discussion with folks here in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County. I am very impressed by the welfare-to-work program that has been instituted. There's obviously a sense of corporate responsibility in this community that is powerful, that recognizes that the bottom line is one thing but taking care of their fellow humans is another. The county—leadership in the county is forward-thinking and aggressive

as to providing resources to help people, help each individual succeed. They've got a spirit of innovation here in this county that needs to be heralded because of the successes.

So I'm proud to be here. But I'm most proud of the individuals who have made a conscious decision to improve their lives and, therefore, in many cases, improve the lives of their children: Women who have overcome terrible odds to become successful role models, articulate spokespeople for themselves, their families, a system that cares about their successes.

And so I want to thank you all for sharing with me your stories and your history. Ella, today she works at the Park Hotel. She was down and out. She made a decision to succeed. She received the help necessary. And she read us a poem today that was so moving to all of us that we asked her to share that, if you don't mind.

[At this point, discussion participant Ella Currence recited her poem entitled "The Struggle to Independence."]

Q. Sir——

The President. A couple of quick ones.

Republic of Georgia

Q. Yes, if you don't mind. Do you think there's Al Qaida influence in Georgia?

The President. I do. So long as there's Al Qaida influence anywhere, we will help the host countries rout them out and bring them to justice.

Q. What specifically are we doing to help Georgia?

The President. Mainly, equipment and technical advice. Obviously, in order for us to work closely with governments that have been invaded by Al Qaida cells, they're going to have to request—request help. And we've made it very clear that either you're with us or you're against us, and we've made it very clear that we hope that nations step up and do their jobs.

Obviously, we've got a presence in the Philippines because there's an Al Qaida-affiliated group of people there. And we've had some successes in Yemen, where we're working. We're working around the world.

When this war started, I told the American people that there would be a variety of fronts

on the war against terrorism, some of which would be very visible, some of which we wouldn't see much about. And the American people need to know that, one, we're maintaining our coalition and the efforts of the coalition, and two, any time we find terrorist organizations like Al Qaida, we will do everything we can to bring them to justice.

And so, yes.

Colombia

Q. Mr. President, what about Colombia? What can you do there? You have some legal constraints as to how far you can go.

The President. Well, we did have legal constraints. We were providing advice to the Colombian Government as to drug eradication, and we need to keep it that way. The law is very clear. If the Colombian Government decides to take military action against the FARC, which they—it looks like they may decide to do and continue to do, that is their business to do so. I applaud the efforts of the President, by the way, to try to bring order to the country. But we are restricted by law, and I intend to adhere to that law.

National Debt Ceiling

Q. Mr. President, what did you tell the congressional leaders this morning about the debt limit? And what ceiling are you comfortable with?

The President. Well, we'll leave the size of the debt ceiling to the Treasury officials. They will make the recommendation. But I told the—recommended to the Members of the legislation that we not play politics with the debt ceiling, that we're at war, we've got troops all around the world, we've got men and women whose lives are at risk. And now is not the time to be playing politics or using the debt ceiling as an excuse for some individual's cause.

We need to have a good, sane policy. And I think the Members there at breakfast agreed with me, that now is an inappropriate time to play politics with the debt ceiling. It's happened in the past. Both parties are guilty about playing politics with the debt ceiling. And I urge the Congress deal with the debt ceiling, deal with it in a professional way, and move it on.

Yes, Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News].

Gallup Poll in Arab Nations

Q. Mr. President, the Gallup organization has run a poll in Arab nations showing that there is deep suspicion and resentment of the United States. What do you make of that? How big a problem? What can you do about it?

The President. Well, Terry, I saw that, briefly looked at—I haven't analyzed the sampling and who was asked and all that stuff. But here's my attitude. If the United States shows strong leadership when it comes to fighting terrorist organizations, the world will follow. And if we're determined and resolute at routing out murderers and killers, people who want to destabilize legitimate governments, the world, regardless of the nature of their population, the religious nature of their population, will respect that.

Secondly, there is no question that we must do a better job of telling the compassionate side of the American story. And I will give you one example. This kind and great Nation provides 300,000 tons of food a year to starving North Korean citizens. And yet, the North Korean citizen has no idea that we provided the food. We don't even know whether or not the food has gotten to the starving North Korean people. All we know is, we made a strong commitment, followed through on that commitment.

My point, Terry, is that it is essential for us to not assume that the kindness of the country is known. And therefore, we've got to do a better job of telling the story. And I'll give you one good example of how we perhaps can do that. Colin Powell went on international MTV, and the first question he was asked, by a lady from Brazil—and I'll paraphrase—was basically, "Why is the nation of America so evil?" And it floored him, like it would floor most Americans to think that people would think of our Nation is evil, when, in fact, defending freedom is good. We're the largest supplier of help and food and medicine in the world. But Colin was able, in his classy fashion, to answer the question and all of a sudden was part of an education process.

So we've got work to do. And people will realize we're peaceful, yet we're determined

and patient, and we use our strength for positive reasons.

Last question. I know you're awaiting my speech.

2002 Elections

Q. Mr. President, later today you're going to a fundraiser. As we move deeper into an election year that's also a year of war against terrorism, how much support can Republicans count on from their popular President?

The President. I'm interested in making sure that the Speaker of the House is Denny Hastert. I've made that very clear. I think my job will be easier if Denny Hastert is the Speaker. I'd like to see Trent Lott be the majority leader, and I will work to those ends.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. at the Chamber of Commerce. In his remarks, he referred to President Andres Pastrana of Colombia. He also referred to FARC, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to the Chamber of Commerce in Charlotte

February 27, 2002

Thank you. Only in America. [*Laughter*] Frances, thanks. I appreciate your story; I appreciate your courage; and I appreciate your introduction. I'm also thankful that Tommy Thompson agreed to leave the State of Wisconsin to come and help make sure that Health and Human Services was run in the right spirit, in the right, compassionate attitude, one in which we fight for Federal funds that are reasonable and realistic but understand that the true wisdom and strength of the country is at the local level.

Speaking about the local level, I want to thank the mayor and Parks. Thank you very much for being here, as well. I appreciate both you all's leadership. The innovation that takes place in this community is positive and strong, and that's why we're here, to herald a program that actually works. Sometimes they sound good on paper. They read good, but the results are short. And that's not the case in Mecklenburg County when it comes

to putting people to work. So I want to thank you all for your leadership.

I had the privilege of flying down with Sue Myrick and Robin Hayes today on the airplane, two really good United States Congressmen from the State of North Carolina, people who understand that North Carolinians can best run North Carolina, and not people out of Washington, DC. So I want to thank you all for coming. And I want to thank Rodney Carroll, as well, for being here. I want to thank Carroll Gray and members of the Chamber.

A lot of times I talk about responsibility, ushering in a period of responsible behavior in America. There is such thing as corporate responsibility, corporate America not only making sure the balance sheets are real, that all assets and liabilities are exposed for shareholder and employee alike. But there's something about saying, "I'm going to do something in the community in which I live," working hard to take the extra step to employ somebody, to keep them on, to help them work through their difficulties. This is a community in which corporate North Carolina or corporate Charlotte has heard that call, and I want to thank the Chamber for being on the leading edge of encouraging corporate responsibility.

First, let me tell you that, as I said a while ago, the state of this Union is very strong. It is clear to me, when I sat in the room today, that the state of the State of North Carolina is strong and vibrant, at least in this corner of the State, if not the whole State. But the state of our Union is strong. We are steady; we're resolved; and we are a determined nation.

You know, the enemy attacked a nation that they thought was weak, and man, did they make a mistake. They thought the United States was so materialistic, so caught up in a false Hollywood vision of America, that we would accept their attack as part of the normalcy in America, that we would do nothing about it. And they've now learned that this Nation is absolutely resolved to defend that which we hold dearest to our heart, and that's freedom—that when somebody attacks freedom, that we'll defend it with all our force and all our might. And that's what we're doing.